

GLORY OF BEHAR IN PICTURES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

Dr. RAJENDRA PRASAD

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INTRODUCTION

(Translated from Dr. Rajendra Prasad's Original Hindi Introduction)

During my travels I noticed in temples of South India ancient stories vividly portrayed. In Buddhist temples the biographical stories of Lord Buddha are inscribed on stones and the caves of Ellora also contain stone carvings which tell stories of old. When the Congress was decided to be held at Ramgarh, it struck me that if the history of Behar could be depicted, it would be beautiful and captivating. It is a vast subject—for it is no easy task to tell the stories of thousands of years in a few pictures. I had therefore sought the advice of some historians and artists who gave me much encouragement. The subject matters were selected by Messrs. Rahul Sankrityan, Joy Chandra Vidyalankar and Prithwi Singh Mehta. Mr. Dines Boxi and Mr. Upendra Maharathi—the two eminent artists, took the task in hand with great enthusiasm. They were greatly assisted by Mr. Prithwi Singh Mehta on my request. They were also assisted by two other artists—Gokula Das Kapadia and Indra Dugar. The veteran artist, Mr. Iswari Prasad Varma, sometime Vice-Principal and later Principal of the Government School of Arts, Calcutta, took keen interest in the work and his worthy son Mr. Mahabir Prasad also welcomed the idea.

It was not possible to bring out many pictures within so short a time, but the few pictures that have been got ready have been educative and they conjure up the whole history of Behar by recalling to our mind many important events. Their full details will be found in Mr. Prithwi Singh Mehta's "Behar ki Aitihasik Digdarsan" which is also published simultaneously. The artists deserve our special thanks for the enthusiasm and energy with which they have prepared the pictures. I am not an artist myself,—I look at paintings with the eye of the average man, and to me they appear very fine indeed. Ray Krishnadas, the eminent art critic of Benares, has seen some of the pictures and has the warmest praise for them. These pictures will be exhibited in the Ramgarh Congress Exhibition. It was therefore thought proper to print these pictures in book form with a view to give the public a chance to preserve their copies with descriptions. It is a matter of great pleasure that Pushtak Bhandar of Laheriasarai have undertaken the task of publication. I hope the pictures would prove not merely attractive but also educative and would serve to create interest in the proud annals of Behar.

SADAKAT ASHRAM, PATNA

THE SWAYAMVAR OF SEETA

The portals of the palace of the King of Mithila were alive with music. Flags and festoons fluttered from every door. Golden jars, symbolic of peace and plenty, were deposited at places. There was a big concourse of kings and princes. It was the day of the marriage of Seeta.

But there was a difficult condition laid down. He alone who would break the bow of Shiva would deserve the hands of the princess. Many powerful kings got up and attempted to do the deed. But not to talk of the bow being broken, it could not even be lifted. The kings went back to their seats and hung their heads in shame. The bow remained inexorable as Fate.

The relatives of the bride were thrown into despair. Janak feared that Seeta would have to remain a spinster now. Breaking through this atmosphere of deep despondency, a beaming handsome young man arose and proceeded slowly towards the bow. He was no other than Prince Rambchandra of Ayodhya. People looked at him with hopelessness and contempt. The bow which had defied the strength of the mighty kings could not possibly yield to the touch of that young man, sweet as a flower and delicate as foam.

But lo! he grasped the bow, and stretched at it. There was a crack followed by a terrific sound. The people were bewildered. When they opened their eyes wide, the bow had been snapped asunder. A vibration of joy ran through Janak. His whole frame shook with paternal affection.

Princess Seeta had been silently watching the scene from her window. Her brow had been contorted into a bow a moment before. But with the breaking of the bow below, her brow also smoothed itself again.

The idol of *Ganpati* which had adorned the hall danced, as it were, with joy at the scene.

Artists—Dinesh Boxi.

Gokula Das Kapadia.

JARASANDH

Long long before the Christian era, Jarasandh ruled in Rajgrhih, modern Rajgir. His prowess was great and unbeatable. Nobody knows how many princes he had defeated and imprisoned in the caves there. Even the Kings of Hastinapur, now Delhi, were afraid of meeting him in an open fight. Lord Krishna himself had to build a new city called Dwarikapuri as a protection against the stormy attacks of Jarasandh.

In order to kill him, Krishna and Bheemsen had to take recourse to stratagem. He was mighty, unconquerable ; nobody was a match for him. Whensoever people think of the *Rajsuya* sacrifices of Yudhishthir, Jarasandh invariably comes into memory and along with it the artifices which were employed to destroy him.

Artist—Ishwari Prasad Verma.



Plate No. 3



MAHAIANAK'S ORDEAL

MAHAJANAK'S ORDEAL

Eight hundred years before Christ, there lived in Mithila a king called Mahajanak. He was as courageous as grave. But behind that apparent gravity he nursed like a poisonous serpent, a spirit of revenge which made his life very restless. In order to wreak vengeance upon the enemies of his father, he one day left for Sumatra by boat. The sea was rough and erratic. But the barge containing the king and many business people ploughed through the waves with great majesty and swiftness. The king was highly pleased with the speed, little knowing at the time how this speed would be their undoing before long.

All of a sudden the boat collapsed. The passengers began to shriek in dismay. All around Death appeared to be dancing in all fierceness. There was no help. There was no prospect of any rescue either. Death seemed to be keeping a strict watch on all fronts. Some sat in their seats and submitted themselves willingly into the hands of death. Even those who jumped into the sea became an easy prey to crocodiles and other aquatic animals. Destruction played havoc with the lives of the people. In the midst of that terrible catastrophe, if there was any one who kept the peace of mind, it was Mahajanak. His face beamed with the tranquillity born of prayer and his eyes scintillated with the calm of benediction. With the collapse of the boat, his hopes and longings had also collapsed. But there was one thing which he never lost and it was his infinite patience. He saw with his own eyes the mad dance of death, he saw the misery of the people, their tears, their terror, their pain ; and despite all that, he got down with the same courage and patience into the sea.

After struggling and buffeting, for seven days and seven nights against the waves, he, with the help of Manimekhala, came back to Mithila again.

Plate No. 4

MAHABIR

Artist—Ishwari Prasad Verma.

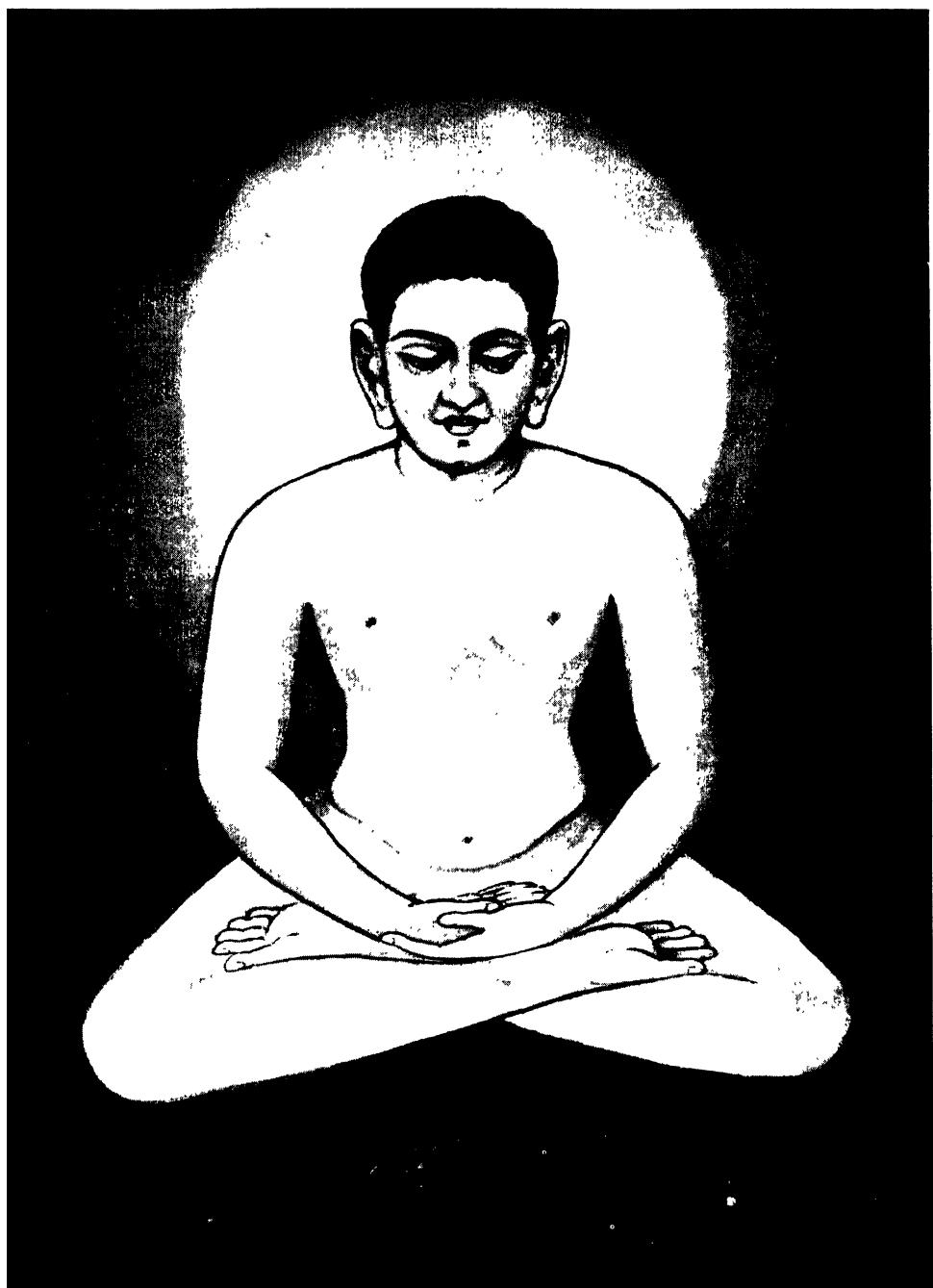


Plate No. 5



HOW MAHABIR TOOK SANYAS

Dreams sometimes foreshadow the events to come. Tashla Devi dreamt times and again that she would give birth to a great man. The dream was converted into a conviction.

In due course Tashla Devi gave birth to Vardhman. He was as handsome, and strong as mischievous. Even while a child, he had harassed a wild elephant. This earned him the name of Mahabir. Later on he became the founder of the well-known Jain religion.

Ever through his life there was a cloud hanging over his mental horizon. This cloud came down as rain upon him and drenched his whole being. Mahabir would always torment himself with the thought, *viz.*, how and why was it that animals were killed to please the gods! Ultimately he decided to become a Sanyasin. A forest bird would not remain in the cage any more, even though the cage was made of gold. It must roam unfettered in the free air. He could suffer the pains of begging with an empty bowl, but he could not bear the agonies of his heart. One day he bade good-bye to his near and dear ones.

Just imagine, Mahabir was leaving home for the life of a Sanyasin. The inmates of the house stood at the door, their heads bent down, and the eyes welling up with tears. Some ladies accompanied him some distance to give him a last farewell. His own wife crept slowly along behind her sister-in-law. Who could describe the depth of her misery? The little child of Mahabir touched the hem of his mother's *Sari* and tenderly asked "what's all this about?"

Some presented him with flowers, some with tears. The neighbours too came in large numbers. All of them bore an expression of profound sorrow and respect. While some folded their hands and touched his feet, Mahabir proceeded on with words of benediction and solace for everybody.

Plate No. 6

MAHATMA BUDDHA

Artist—Ishwari Prasad Verma.



Plate No. 7



LORD BUDDHA'S INSTRUCTIONS TO BHIKSHUKAS

LORD BUDDHA'S INSTRUCTIONS TO BHIKSHUKAS

Gautum had already got the enlightenment. He wanted to impart this new knowledge to the human beings. He wanted to take out this world from the depths of darkness into the radiance of eternity.

He proceeded towards Sarnath. There he met sixty Bhikshukas who listened to his words and became impressed with the largeness of his heart and purity of his teachings. They got the peace of their soul and added strength to their knowledge. They became imbued with the same spirit as that of Buddha. They accepted his discipleship and were converted into his faith.

Buddha sent all his 60 disciples in different directions for the well-being of the people. He said to them—"You go about in this world disseminating knowledge and teaching mankind the way to happiness. Each one should go his own way and no two together." He added—

"चरथ भिक्खवे चारित वहुजन हिताय वहुजन सुखाय"

i.e. "You, Bhikshukas, roam about this earth for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many."

Thus although apparently he sent his disciples in different directions, they had only one direction to go, only one road to tread and that was the road of the good and happiness of mankind.

Artist—Upendra Maharathi.

THE LAST LOOK AT VAISHALI

It was in the dim past that Vaishali was in the heyday of its glory. It wore the beauty of moonlight. It was really the dream city of India. The houses ranged on two sides of the road bore evidence of the exquisite artistic taste of the inhabitants. The city was interspersed with parks and gardens full of lovely flowers. The butterflies flew about as if drunk with love. The swans would dive, come up and dive again, as if intoxicated with the beauty of the blossoms. Men were free and happy. They walked about with bows on their shoulders and indulged in discussions of religion and morality. Women wore dresses of various colours, adorned their bodies with jewels and passed through the streets, in groups, singing heavenly songs.

At the time, *Lichhavis* were the rulers of the province. Lord Buddha was very fond of Vaishali. He used to visit the city very often. Whenever he came, he mixed with the citizens and taught them the principles of true religion. The inhabitants gradually grew into the habit of worshipping him and talking about him. Even if they wished, they could not forget Lord Buddha.

Every time he came to the city, he became an object of reception and adoration to them. But 480 years before the birth of Christ when one day he passed out of the northern gate of Vaishali, he suddenly stopped and cast a longing look behind.

His constant companion and disciple Anand was also there. Absorbed in some deep contemplation, he remarked to him—"Anand, I am looking at Vaishali for the last time."

And indeed, it was his last look at Vaishali. After that he never came back to his beloved city.



THE LAST LOOK AT VAISHALI

Plate No.



ALEXANDER GOES BACK

History is replete with stories of the triumphs of Alexander. Not to talk of conquering lands and nations, he aspired to conquer even the moon and the stars. As children cannot do without play, so Alexander could not do without wars and conquests. Before his compelling force, there was no standard which stood erect, no soldier who would not accept defeat.

Even as a black portentous cloud, he descended upon the northern frontiers of India. But suddenly he had to cry halt.

His soldiers had heard of the unequalled strength of the heroes of Magadh, and also of their amazing skill in forming intricate patterns of warfare. They had also been told how the elephants stood their ground unshaken by the showers of arrows.

The Greek soldiers were nonplussed. They had not the courage left to go a step further. They fell down on the feet of Alexander and implored him to revise his decision.

Artist—Upendra Maharathi.

SELF-SURRENDER OF SELUCUS

Selucus came upon India like a hurricane. There was none to resist him, none to check him. In the northern quarter of India, he was booming like a storm and flaming like fire. But all his tempestuousness failed before the might of the King of Magadh. His dream of the conquest of the world disappeared. His ambitions were trampled upon. Chandragupta inflicted upon him a crushing defeat.

But he had to eat humble-pie when he had to walk to the court of Chandragupta with his daughter. This Greek hero who had never yet bowed his head to a human being had to take off his hat and place it on the ground. His daughter was almost dead with shame as she stood in the court. He presented her to Chandragupta as a wife. His soldiers stood behind him and drank to the dregs their cup of humiliation.

Chandragupta moved a little forward on his throne and looked at the blushing maiden.

His great Prime Minister and politician Chanakya stood serene. He looked as if the whole affair had taken place according to his own pre-conceived plan.

Artist—Dinesh Boxi.



SELF-SURRENDER OF SELUCUS

Plate No. 11



CONVERSION OF ASHOKA

CONVERSION OF ASHOKA

Ashoka, the great imperialistic Emperor of Magadh, once invaded Kalinga and wished to annex it to his empire. His ferocious battallion swooped upon the helpless city. Swords clashed with swords. Blades of iron were bathed in blood. The whole scene touched deeply the tender springs of the heart of the emperor. He had seen the mad dance of death ; had heard the piteous cries of the wounded and the maimed. Ah, how terrible the war was, how hateful, how disgusting !

. Emperor Ashoka was going on and on, on his chariot. The sun was dying in front of him, blood-stained and deathly pale. The night of ignorance and confusion was advancing steadily from all around. Ashoka could see only the dead and the wounded. He could hear only the wails of the fallen. A death-like quietness prevailed everywhere. But in the midst of this quietness, he was painfully restless. The dead, the wounded and the maimed would flash upon his eye and darken his inmost being.

The horses were galloping with breathless speed. Night was getting darker and darker. The charioteer was anxious to get out of that region of darkness and death. Emperor Ashoka rested his chin on the palm of his hand and was lost in thought—a thought which was as impenetrable and limitless as the darkness itself through which he was passing.

Artist—Indra Dugar.

KUNAL

What were the feelings of the new Queen of Ashoka towards Prince Kunal were not known even to herself. Only she knew that he was a source of torment to her, perhaps because he was a step-son, or perhaps because he was handsome, youthful, charming. No, she could not allow Kunal to stay with her. He must be sent away somewhere. The emperor agreed. Arrangements were made to pack him to Takshashila.

* * * *

The thorn was removed from the sides. But the sting in the heart remained. Kunal was out of sight. But the eyes of Kunal seemed to be searching her heart and noting each one of its beats. His eyes! How big they were! how penetrating! His eyes must be put out.

* * * *

A conspiracy was set on foot. The royal seal was procured and used against him.

One day at Takshashila Kunal got a letter from the King—from his own home—from his own father. His joy knew no bounds. He tore open the sealed envelope and read the following words over the signature of his father: “Kunal, take out both your eyes and send them to me.”

The devoted Kunal did not wait a single moment to think over the matter. The order of his father must be carried out instantly. He took up a dagger, took out both his eyes and placed them in a gold saucer.

Blind with filial affection, Kunal literally made himself blind.

Artist—Indra Dugar.



KUNAL



SAMUDRAGUPTA

SAMUDRAGUPTA

(Reprint from an old coin)

Artist—Indra Dugar.

THE COURT OF SAMUDRAGUPTA

In the 4th Century A.D., Samudragupta was an object of terror all around the earth. His army worked havoc wherever it went. From the river Oxus in the west to Ceylon in the south, his was an unprecedented sway. He used to perform *Aswamedh* sacrifice and was crowned emperor by all.

He was not only brave in fighting, intellectually also he was equally brilliant. Harisen, the great poet, has said of him that in intelligence and wisdom he was a match even for Vrihaspati, the preceptor of the gods ; in the art of music, even Narad and Tumbur admitted his superiority. Even the current coins bore imprints of his verses. He was not only himself a learned man and an artist, he knew how to honour those who deserved honour. For this reason the kings and princes all over the country paid homage to him and were anxious to have his love and friendship.

In this picture the artist has shown how an ambassador from Persia is offering valuable presents to him.

Artist—Upendra Maharathi.



THE COURT OF SAMUDRAGUP



CHANDRAGUPTA VIKRAMADITYA

CHANDRAGUPTA VIKRAMADITYA

(*Reprint from an old coin*)

The heroic deeds of Vikramaditya, the son of Samudragupta, will be enshrined in history, so long as the Vikram era inaugurated by him will pass current among us.

Artist—Gokula Das Kapadia

ARYAVATT

There was a time when Pataliputra, now Patna, was second to none in magnificence and splendour. Even as the fragrance of flowers, the fame of its citizens spread far and wide. Its learned men commanded respect ; its wealthy people inspired others with envy. Men and women devoted themselves to the cultivation of art and learning. They acquired knowledge as long as they lived and their highest happiness consisted in the practice of art.

It happened in 450 A.D. A young man used to sit in his observatory at Pataliputra, marking the movements of the moon and the stars. He carried on researches in various directions. He measured the distance of the stars. He lived and worked alone. The study of astronomy was a passion with him. Day in and day out, he sat observing the stellar world. He was no other than Aryavatt.

One day he discovered something. He reflected, calculated, compared and verified. He found everything correct and accurate. He was filled with a sense of happiness and surprise.

A meeting of the wise and the learned was convened. Aryavatt very calmly explained his discovery to them. They were startled. They all exclaimed—Is it so!

Aryavatt was right. He had found out that the earth revolves round the sun.

Artist—Upendra Maharathi.



Plate No. 17



SKANDHGUPTA

THE VICTORY OF SKANDHGUPTA

About the year 600 A.D.

"Mother, I am going to the battle-field." Thus saying, Skandhgupta touched his mother's feet.

The mother was taken aback. She exclaimed, "You are going to the battle-field, Skandh? You are yet a mere child!"

Skandhgupta smiled—"I am no more a child, mother; I am a general."

"A general!" These words came out of the mother's lips unawares. There was a note of pride in it, together with affection.

The young Skandhgupta came out of the palace with the same joy and pride with which the tears came out of his mother's eyes.

* * * *

"Mother, Oh mother!" The walls of the ladies' courtyard echoed with this tender sound.

Mother hastily rushed towards the door. "Victory, mother, I have won the battle-field. Let us thank God Shiva."

Mother ran up to him and hid him in her embrace.

Artist—Gokula Das Kapadia.

CORONATION OF GOPAL.

In the days of yore in Bihar, the succession to the throne was not determined by any hereditary rights. The crown was placed on him alone who deserved it.

Gopal came of an ordinary middle class family. But he was a man of extraordinary talents. Far far from the madding crowd, he sat quietly in his cottage and devoted himself to the study of politics and other sciences. He possessed unusual physical strength as well. But he had never had any opportunity of displaying it.

Gopal was always loved and respected by his people. They always referred to him with affection.

After the death of the King, he was selected by the people to succeed him. The subjects were jubilant. The virgins decorated him with the royal insignia. The Prime Minister swung censer before him. The whole palace was alive with joy and music.

Artist—Dinesh Boxi.



CORONATION OF GOPAL

Plate No. 10



THE LETTER OF SHAILENDRADEVA

In the 8th Century A.D., Magadh was the centre of learning and religion. People from far and near used to come there to satisfy their intellectual appetite. The University of Nalanda had established its reputation. Principal Virdeva was a name to conjure with among scholars. Distance, difficulties of the road, dangers of the forest meant nothing to the searchers of knowledge. But even then many had to go back disappointed for want of accommodation. The scholars desirous of admission had, at first, to enter into an academic disputation with the porter and it was only after passing this intelligence test that they were admitted into the university.

This great university was international in character. Scholars from Siam, Java and Sumatra used to come there seeking admission. But those who were refused admission were sorely disappointed. Shailendradeva, the King of Java, was very unhappy about it. He determined to secure admission for his students in the Nalanda University. He wrote a letter to the Principal intimating to him that he would, at his own expense, build a boarding-house for his students.

Principal Virdeva and Emperor Devapal were conversing together in the same room. Some scholars also were sitting round them and discussing some problems of philosophy or science. That very time the messenger was ushered in. He knelt down and presented the letter of Shailendradeva.

Artist—Indra Dugar.

VADANT ATISHA

The King of Nepal was suffering from an unquenchable thirst of knowledge. He invited hundreds of learned men and listened to their profound discourse on science and philosophy. But he was never satisfied.

His heart yearned for a learned man who would give him full satisfaction. But where such a learned man was to be met with? Who was that learned man?

“Atisha” was the reply.

* * * *

Atisha was a disciple of Buddha. He had his hermitage by the side of the Ganges. On one side flowed the river with its sparkling murmur. On the bank of it flowed the river of science and philosophy. It was a place of pilgrimage for the seekers after truth. Many a pilgrim came to him, gathered knowledge at his feet and departed again imbued with the mission of service to mankind.

* * * *

The messenger of the King of Nepal came to Atisha and in very polite terms delivered his message. Atisha smiled and accepted his invitation. All the valuable books were loaded on an elephant. And accompanied by his disciples, he proceeded towards Nepal.

Artist—Indra Dugar.



VADANT ATISHA



SHER SHAH

SHER SHAH

Humayun making conquests after conquests darted towards Bengal. He had not the least idea at the time that he would have to deal with a strange adversary.

Sher Shah heard of Humayun's meteoric process. A smile flit across his lips. Round about Buxar his soldiers encamped and instead of taking swords took up spades and shovels and began digging trenches.

When Humayun returned, his way had been blocked. He could not advance towards Delhi in any way. He felt annoyed. But there was no help. He had to submit to the armed might of the opponents. He wanted truce.

His messengers searched for Sher Shah among the soldiers. They were all busy digging trenches. At last a man came out, shovel in hand and his forehead bedaubed with perspiration. The messengers were astonished to find that he was Sher Shah himself. It was this Sher Shah who had set at naught even the might of the Emperor of Delhi.

Later on Sher Shah came to terms with Humayun and allowed him a passage to Delhi.

Artist—Gokula Das Kapadia.

GURU GOVIND SINGH

So long the cheering voice of *Shree Vahguru* will issue from the Harmandir at Patna, so long Guru Govind Singh will be remembered by the people.

Although Patna was not the field of his activity, Patna is proud of being his birthplace. Harmandir is a living monument of that.

Artist—Ishwari Prasad Verma.



GURU GOVIND SINGH



Plate No. 23

MIR KASIM

Artist—Gokula Das Kapadia.

MIR KASIM

The Britishers thrived on the ruins brought about by the unrestrained pleasures of the Nabobs. The former had come to India with a view to trade, but they now saw prospects of establishing an empire. If there was one person who could scent this mischievous move, it was Mir Kasim of Patna. He thought of stopping it as early as he could.

The Gun Factory at Monghyr is a bright evidence of his foresightedness and shrewdness. The whole work progressed under his personal supervision. Many Frenchmen were also employed in the manufacturing department.

The Ganges flowing beneath the fort at Monghyr is reverberating with the heroic attempt of Mir Kasim. Those who can may listen to it even now.

Artist—Gokula Das Kapadia.



THE GUN FACTOR OF MIR KAS



BABU KUNWAR SINGH

BABU KUNWAR SINGH

There was a time when Babu Kunwar Singh was a staunch ally of the British. But a time came, unfortunately in his old age, when he had to take up arms against them. His brave deed will live for ever in the annals of India.

Artist—Radhamohan.

BIRSA BHAGWAN

Birsa used to teach in a village called "Chalkad" in Chotanagpur. People poured in from all directions, even as a flood, to listen to his talks.

The English by this time had established their suzerainty over India. Birsa having been educated in a Mission School had become a convert to Christianity. But later he realised the mistake he had committed. He did not like to barter away his culture and religion on any account. Even the idea of foreign domination became a source of torture to him. He gave up Christianity. He exhorted people to abjure drinking habits.

There was a magnetic charm and spiritual force behind all his utterances. Men and women flocked together in large numbers to listen to him and worship him. They gave him the title of "Bhagwan" or God.

Once the Ranchi police besieged the cave in which he used to live. He was mercilessly gagged and his whole body was secured in fetters. On some imaginary charge, he was sentenced to 3 years' rigorous imprisonment.

A little before the expiry of the term he came out and started preaching again. Only there was more force, more fire, more bitterness in all that he said.

He fell a prey to the British machination once more. He was huddled back to jail. But he came out of it no more. It was announced that he died of cholera.

Artist—Upendra Maharathi.



BIRSA BHAGWAN

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